

## SUPPLEMENT TO

# BIBLE SOCIETY RECORD.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 24, 1881.

### *TO THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.*

The attention of the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society, at the November meeting, was called to certain anonymous criticisms upon the last Annual Report which have lately appeared in public prints, and it was referred to the Committee of General Reference to examine into the nature of these criticisms and make a fit reply, if occasion should so require.

Those criticisms have now taken a new shape, in an alleged arraignment of this Society by the executive committee of the Connecticut Bible Society, published by newspapers, but not furnished to this Society nor known to it in any official form. Without waiting for an authenticated or responsible copy of the action of said executive committee, the Committee of General Reference of the American Bible Society deem it due to its members and friends, that a prompt communication be made to them of the true state of the matter as it now stands.

The following response therefore is made to the several paragraphs of the alleged arraignment:

I. Whether or not the Connecticut Bible Society has hitherto "warmly cherished" its auxiliary relation to the American Society may be inferred from the fact that it has not contributed a penny to the treasury of this Society for three years and eight months, and that its entire donations in the past nine years amount to only \$660, and have all been specially appropriated to life memberships.

II. The Connecticut Bible Society was never invited to send a committee "to investigate the financial affairs of the Society." The conference which was sought in 1880 was for the sole object of laying privately before the management of the Connecticut Society a remonstrance against the course which their secretary was pursuing, in habitually throwing out insinuations and complaints, and of exhibiting testimony from various parts of the State that his undisguised hostility not only impaired his usefulness but put in

the extremest jeopardy the relations of the two Societies.

In the course of the Conference which ensued, other matters came up for discussion, and the gentlemen from Connecticut were assured that if they chose to send down any of their associates, who were familiar with accounts and securities, to see with what safety the Society's investments had been made and how its business was conducted, they would be received with all frankness and confidence.

In pursuance of this suggestion, two of their executive committee were shortly after deputed to visit the Bible House, although no intimation of their appointment was given to the Board of Managers until nearly five months had passed. It then appeared that one of these gentlemen, Mr. Rodney Dennis, of Hartford, assumed that they had been appointed auditors for the American Bible Society, and accordingly he made reiterated demand that in advance of his coming to New York there should be sent to him at Hartford "an exhaustive statement giving the entire assets and resources, including legacies and all property owned and enjoyed by the Society, together with the liabilities; the same to be attested by the executive officers, and furnished us by mail."

This demand was of course declined.

The Society was under no obligation to its Auxiliary to open its accounts for its inspection, even in the city of New York; and there was no propriety that its books and accounts, or copies of them, should be sent out of the State to be inspected by a critic whose hostility was then beginning to become apparent.

When the two gentlemen finally made it convenient to come to the Bible House, they were received not only "with a show of courtesy," but with every consideration due to persons admitted to a confidential interview with a deputation from the Board of Managers. Every question which they asked was answered; every document and account book which they desired to see was exhibited: Mr. Dennis only objecting

because he was denied the privilege of copying for publication accounts which he was permitted to inspect. Neither he nor his associate had any fault to find with the investments of the Society, nor with its general methods of business, but on the contrary they expressed unbounded satisfaction with the information they had received, and especially with the extent of the Society's available resources.

III. The charge that the Annual Report does not "contain the frank and full and clear exhibit of the financial condition of the Society" which this committee was given to understand would be published, is sufficiently refuted by reference to the Report itself. That the statement is frank and full and clear does not admit of denial by any responsible being who knows what language means. It contains no "inaccuracies and discrepancies calculated to awaken suspicions of an attempt to mislead the public;" and if anything has been done "to impair the confidence of the public in the American Bible Society," it has been done by Mr. Dennis and his "Accountant," whose blunders and sophistries have been publicly exposed by another member of their executive committee, Mr. J. N. Harris, of New London, who was the associate of Mr. Dennis at the time of his visit to the Bible House.

1. Mr. Dennis was distinctly informed that the balance sheet which he saw early in March was then more than eleven months old. His discovery that the balance sheet of March 31, 1881, differed from it was no surprise to him. He cannot fail to remember that the question was discussed in his presence whether, in publishing for the first time a schedule of the assets and liabilities of the Society, a certain item, representing no productive capital, but certain accounts with foreign agencies, should be expressed in figures or not. Mr. Dennis contended that it ought to appear, in order to magnify the assets as much as possible and give the Society a better standing in the opinion of moneyed men. Mr. Harris took precisely the opposite view. The voice of Connecticut in the interview was a divided voice, but the point under discussion, so far from involving any attempt "to mislead the public," was solely which course would be the fairest presentation of the facts in the case.

2. The balance sheet does not reveal "*an understatement of assets.*" The published page is simply what it professes to be, a transcript from the Society's ledger, not "doctored" for the occasion, as Mr. Dennis's "Accountant" pretends, but containing the items as they there appear, and some of them as they have been for years.

3. No "*overstatement of expenditures* in strictly benevolent and missionary work" is found on pages 42 and 43 of the Report made by the Managers to their constituents. Every dollar of money and every dollar's worth of books there

summarized belongs there, and needs to be taken into account in a review of the year's work.

4. A previous page of the Report mentions all returns in cash which are recited in the Treasurer's Report, and the conjecture of the Connecticut Committee that \$44,535 91 paid for salaries and expenses of colporteurs, is in part identical with the valuation of books sent to colporteurs, is a mere surmise, which has not a shadow of support in any of the statements sanctioned by the Board.

The object of that part of the Annual Report now referred to was to exhibit the extent of the work which, from time to time, had been sanctioned by the Board and its Committees. Whatever returns may come from its colportage and benevolent work, or from grants of previous years, are all entered in their proper place; but had any one of the items on pages 42, 43, been omitted, some jealous critic would have been found, without doubt, to complain that information was withheld to which he was entitled.

IV. The Managers of the American Bible Society have never asked the executive committee of the Connecticut Bible Society to assume responsibility for the conduct of the business done in New York, and which they themselves are competent to direct, nor do they propose to ask their sanction for doing the work which the providence of God has committed to them.

They do, however, most profoundly regret that a committee, on whose list are honoured names of clergymen and laymen, should ignorantly give their endorsement to misrepresentations and assaults, which are unfounded and demonstrably false.

S. WELLS WILLIAMS,	.	President.
FREDERICK S. WINSTON,	Ch'man of Com. on Finance.	
A. ROBERTSON WALSH,	"	Publication.
FREDERICK H. WOLCOTT,	"	Distribution.
CHARLES TRACY,	"	Legacies.
AUGUSTUS TABER,	"	Audit.
WILLIAM H. CROSBY,	"	Anniversaries.
THEOPHILUS A. BROUWER,	"	Agencies.
JOHN COTTON SMITH,	"	Versions.

New York, Nov. 15, 1881.

#### THE WHOLE THING IN A NUTSHELL.

1. In perfect sincerity and good faith, the Managers of the American Bible Society undertook to issue a report which would enable all the world to see what its available resources are, and how faithfully they are cared for and expended; whereupon the executive committee of the Connecticut Bible Society publicly accuse them of having introduced "inaccuracies and discrepancies calculated to awaken suspicion of *an attempt to mislead the public.*"

2. The report covers 104 pages, and the specification of details on which the charge is founded relates to only two of these pages, and to not more than a dozen lines.

3. These charges and specifications have noth-

ing to do with "financial management," but simply with the method of reporting to the public.

4. Following the example of banks and other moneyed institutions, the Society's balance-sheet has one entry representing the Bible House Property at its original cost of \$304,000. The Hartford committee declare that this "reveals an understatement of assets" of immense amount.

5. In accordance with the prevailing usage of the American Board and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, the Foreign Committee of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Society, and the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Report does not enter among the resources, at a definite money value, certain assets in foreign lands which have already been charged as expended in benevolent work. The Hartford committee complain of this as "an attempt to mislead the public."

6. The Report affirms that the sum of certain figures which represent the value of books issued in benevolent work, and certain cash expenditures at home and abroad, is \$342,585 90. The Hartford accountants, working over a different set of figures, calculate that the sum ought to be \$224,885 90.

7. The compilers of the Report are charged "with ignoring large returns in cash acknowledged in the Treasurer's report," because in a paragraph treating of *expenditures* they do not repeat the *receipts* which they have given on a previous page.

9. The Report having stated that books are one thing and money another, the Hartford committee charge that the Managers have duplicated a cash item of \$44,435 91, and that this expenditure of money is "presumably included in the item of \$73,313 69" which represents simply the value of certain issues of books.

◆◆◆

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY,  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT TREASURER,  
NEW YORK, October 11, 1881.

To the Editor of the Springfield Republican:

The communications signed "Accountant" and "New York," and the editorial comments thereon, in your issues of 4th and 7th inst., about "Bible Society Accounts," prompt me to say:

(1.) "Accountant," who declares that the balance of income from a fund held for a specific purpose, and yet to be expended for the object for which the fund was created, is an asset instead of a liability, and should appear on the debit side of a balance sheet instead of on the credit side, shows, for a man who claims to be and is indorsed by you as an expert, an amazing ignorance of a fundamental principle of book-keeping.

When he estimates the cost of book distribution at 232 per cent. on the value, by a calculation based on items which are not in the Re-

port, and which are wholly imaginary, such as:—*if* the Bible House property, machinery, and manufacturing appliances be put in at "Accountant's" valuation; and *if* trust funds be reckoned as assets instead of liabilities, as he claims they should be; and *if* four per cent. on that imaginary aggregate be added to income—and then *if* the Bible distribution in the United States amounted to only \$60,423, which, like his other figures are wholly imaginary—he reveals an animus of hostility rather than the deliberate judgment of an expert.

"Accountant" says that the plain meaning of the statement "that the strictly benevolent work of the Society involved an expenditure of \$342,585 90 is that this sum was expended *without returns*." This is nowhere stated in the Report, but just the reverse is distinctly stated. In the financial statement he may find items of important returns from the Foreign field, and returns of \$53,658 47 from colporteurs, and \$13,449 39 from other sources in the United States; and although he states that "\$224,886 is the whole amount that can have been applied during the year to strictly benevolent and missionary work, and which is \$117,700 less than the amount said to have been so applied," I reply that, in point of fact, there did go out in books and money precisely as stated, \$342,585 90, and the records and vouchers for every item are here to prove it.

Now, if "Accountant" is not prepared to dispute a statement of fact, how does he suppose we were able to give away \$117,700 more than he claims we had to give? He allows a degree of credit for "management" which I must disclaim.

He says, with great gravity, "the securities therein entered (pages 153 to 157) amount at par to \$112,289," and "the Report furnishes no means for accounting for the difference of \$10,029;" and, further on, condescendingly "gives the Society the benefit of this difference." I reply that his statement is not true, as the amount of securities stated on those pages is \$122,268, and not \$112,289, and there is no such difference as he states to be accounted for.

Misled by "Accountant," who makes an analysis of the balance sheet which, I have already shown, must be utterly repudiated, you comment with severity on the management for not publishing the facts you would have your readers believe his analysis establishes.

It is sufficient to say, that a balance sheet is a debit and credit statement of all accounts on a ledger; and had we published an analysis, or summary, or any arbitrary grouping of figures, we should have failed of our purpose, which was, to give a *balance sheet*; from which, of course, the reader may draw his own conclusions; but it is to be hoped there are few self-styled accountants, or experts, who will abuse the Society's

system of bookkeeping for not making a balance sheet a something else that wouldn't balance.

(2.) In the editorial comments you are pleased to say: "It (the Report) does not contain anywhere a clear statement, such as its hundreds (or thousands) of country readers could understand, of what money has been received, what has been expended."

That charge I deny; and I affirm without fear of contradiction that there is a clearly expressed and precise statement of the source of every dollar received, and an intelligible statement of the disbursements. No one able to read can fail to understand the source or amount of receipts, or the purpose, or object, or amount of disbursements. The whole financial statement, for which I am responsible, and which was examined in every item by the Auditing Committee, and which, before it was published, was carefully reviewed and indorsed by the Managers, is made up of figures which no accountant or expert can change to the extent of a fraction; nor could the sources of receipts or the purposes of disbursements be stated in any other way or in words of any other meaning without stating falsely.

Have you read the Report, Mr. Editor, and will you publish the account, or a single line of it, and show your readers wherein it cannot be understood?

(3.) You say the "Society keeps its books so badly." On what grounds do you make that statement, and in what particulars is the bookkeeping faulty?

The purpose of bookkeeping is to record intelligibly and correctly business transactions. Where is the evidence that such a record is not kept of the business of the Bible Society? In what single item has an attempt been made to mislead the public? These are mere insinuations which, to unthinking persons, are better than facts or arguments, and stab the Society deeper, for the design of the critic cannot be mistaken.

You sneer at the item of "discount on sales" being a benevolent appropriation. (The item is not found in the financial statement.) It may be a matter for consideration; but as long as such is the rule and policy of the Society, is there any impropriety in a statement by the Secretary, somewhere on the pages of the Report, of the amount of discounts? And finding that bit of information, are you justified, because you disapprove of it, in impeaching the business capacity of a Committee of the Board who direct the methods of bookkeeping?

On pages 136 to 157 *only* of the Annual Report for this year, you may find the financial statements and accounts prepared under the direction of the Finance Committee; and what is there stated is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and no critic, friendly or

unfriendly, prompted by worthy motives or by enmity, can show to the approving judgment of any fair man how a single figure on those pages can be altered; or lead any man to regard your conclusion that the system of bookkeeping is so faulty, as to lead to the inquiry "whether it be not time to reconstruct, or do away with, a Society that keeps its books so badly," as anything less than an amazing absurdity.

In confirmation of the statements I have here made, the following, which was received after the above was written, appeared in the *New London Telegram*. The author is J. N. Harris, Esq., president of the New London City National Bank. His ability as a financier will not be questioned even by your correspondent, "Accountant."

A. L. TAYLOR,  
Assistant Treasurer.

[FROM THE NEW LONDON TELEGRAM.]

In the *Springfield Republican* of the 4th inst., and the same was copied into the *New York Times*, there is a criticism on the American Bible Society of New York that is calculated to do injustice, and to harm the good name of that institution, and was intended no doubt for that purpose.

It is a criticism on the accounts as stated in the Sixty-fifth Annual Report of the Society, May 12th, 1881, and is signed "Accountant."

This criticism will not deceive any person acquainted with bookkeeping in large financial institutions, but it will deceive the great body of "contributors" who know nothing about the proper statement of such accounts, and this no doubt was the design of the writer.

In order to give a clear understanding of the subject I present first the balance sheet, April 1st, 1881—page 144. Report:—

ASSETS.		
Bible House property—original cost.....	\$304,000 00	
Book accounts:—		
Due from Auxiliaries .....	\$23,788 21	
" Merchants.....	3,978 06	27,766 27
Due from Colporteurs.....	18,335 89	
Cash in Bank.....	31,801 60	
Depository Inventory.....	53,333 25	
Salesroom "	4,238 62	
Manufacturing Room Inventory, including presses, machinery, and tools.....	188,329 11	
Electrotype and Stereotype plates, Inven- tory.....	105,545 63	
Engine Room Inventory, boiler, engine, shafting, etc.....	25,117 27	
Fuel, etc.....	409 54	
Temporary Investment.....	549,232 50	
Securities assigned, donated, and deposited under various restrictions.....	73,635 30	
Special Investments of Funds received on certain conditions.....	48,683 00	
Trustee account—balance of income.....	86 49	
		\$1,430,514 47
LIABILITIES.		
By balance in favour of auxiliaries and others.....	\$126,968 90	
" balance of Burr Fund.....	6,447 35	
" Trust Funds.....	48,683 24	
" Securities, assigned and on deposit.....	73,635 30	
" Balance.....	1,174,779 68	
		\$1,430,514 47

The writer's criticisms upon the liabilities are, first: "The Burr Fund," (see balance sheet) \$6,447 35. This, he says, is not a liability at all, but "a part of a fund to be expended for Bibles

for the blind, and should be added to the balance account." According to "Accountant's" theory of bookkeeping, because a debt is to be paid in Bibles the Society don't owe it. This money does not belong to the Society; they have no claim on it whatever, and to treat it as proposed by "Accountant" would be a breach of trust. Why does he suggest this? He next takes up the items of credit, (see balance sheet): "Trust Funds \$48,683," and "securities assigned and on deposit \$73,635" added together make \$122,318. He says, "on pages 153-7 are detailed statements of trust and investments held by the Society, and securities assigned by executors of estates." "The securities therein entered amount at par to \$112,289." "The report furnishes no means of accounting for the difference, \$10,029." Is this statement true? No. Look at the two last but one items in the account of assets on the debit side of the balance sheet, and we find precisely these two items accounted for in the property of the society, and making \$122,318. There is no \$10,029, or any sum unaccounted for, as "Accountant" intimates.

These securities in the balance sheet represent cost, and not their par value as stated in the schedule, precisely as the item of "Temporary Investments," \$549,232 50.

The schedule statement of the par value of these securities, page 157, is \$521,762 72. They cost the Society \$549,232 50, and are so entered in their assets. "Accountant" says, "their market value April 1st, 1881, was \$595,640."

"Accountant" says that the items on the credit side of balance sheet, \$48,683, and \$73,635, are not liabilities, and should be added to balance account. By reference to the Report of the Society, pages 153-7, it will be found that most of these sums are specific gifts and legacies, with various conditions attached; many of them are of the same nature as the "Burr Fund," and the statement as made in the Bible Society's balance sheet is correct, and the only proper way to state the account.

The Bible House stands in the assets at \$304,000; that is what the property cost. "Accountant" says it is worth more than that sum, and the difference should be added to the balance account.

The Bible House property was procured by special gifts, for that definite purpose, by a few generous citizens of New York, that the Bible Society should always have a home free of rent. Not a dollar of money contributed for the manufacture or distribution of Bibles ever went into the expense of building the Bible House. It was a free gift of noble Christian men. The property is not for sale, and there could be no possible gain or advantage to the Society in advancing the price on their books.

"Accountant" says that the *Temporary Investment Fund* should be advanced \$46,408, and that sum added to balance account, that being the difference between the cost of the securities and the value he places on them on the 1st of April, 1881. Where did "Accountant" get his education in bookkeeping? Did he ever know of a savings bank, insurance company, trust company, or any other institution holding securities, that went through their books from time to time and altered the valuation of securities according to the fluctuations of the market? No, that is not the practice. The kind and sum of securities held by the American Bible Society are

clearly stated at their par value, page 156. The cost is stated in the balance sheet. Their market value on no two days is alike.

"Accountant" has a long criticism on the management of the affairs of the Society, with an array of figures which are as clear and probably of about as much value as his suggestions in regard to the mode of keeping accounts, but these do not come into the bookkeeping account, and I pass them by.

On pages 136, 139 of the Report the Society state clearly their receipts for the year, the sources from which they came, and also what was done with the money. These accounts were examined in detail by the Auditing Committee and found correct.

There are no more honest or honorable men living than the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society. Most of them are now old men, having spent a lifetime in the management without one dollar compensation or personal advantage. Contributors to the Bible Society funds need have no fears that the accounts will not be kept correctly, or that their contributions will not be used for the purposes the donors intend.

J. N. H.

New London, Oct. 7, 1881.

#### NOTE FROM BALANCE SHEET.

The following note was appended to the debit side of the balance sheet:

NOTE.—Large sums of money have been expended by the Society from year to year in the prosecution of its benevolent work in foreign lands. Portions of these expenditures remain in the form of plates, books, and stock in the process of manufacture; but if they possess any commercial value it is so entirely uncertain that it cannot be tabulated.

#### EXTRACT FROM THE SIXTY-FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT.

The Board of Managers have in the past year, as heretofore, availed themselves of every suitable agency for promoting the wider circulation of the Scriptures at home and in the foreign field. The following summary of grants and appropriations shows the extensive scale upon which the Society has conducted its work, and the far-reaching influence of its operations. The results accomplished by these gifts are presented in detail in other parts of this Report:

##### HOME FIELD.

Grants of books to auxiliaries and others . . . . .	\$45,810 87
"        " for Colportage work . . . . .	73,313 69
Cancellation of debts to auxiliaries . . . . .	241 09
Discount on sales . . . . .	17,113 34
Books to Life Directors and Life Members . . . . .	9,732 97
	<hr/>
	\$146,211 98

Salaries of District Superintendents . . . . .	\$27,174 11
Expenses for travelling, printing, etc. . . . .	7,758 20
	<hr/>
	34,932 31
Salaries and expenses of Colporteurs, including freight on books . . . . .	44,435 91
Bible Society Record, net expense, Annual Report, etc. . . . .	3,672 94
	<hr/>
	8,885 09

Total for the Home Field . . . . . \$234,465 27

##### FOREIGN FIELD.

For the translation, manufacture, purchase, and distribution of the Scriptures in foreign lands, the following payments have been made to the

Society's agencies and to various missionary societies:

To the Agency in Turkey and the Levant . . . . .	\$43,776 26
" " Persia . . . . .	3,660 48
" " Uruguay . . . . .	3,226 99
" " China and Japan . . . . .	24,135 09
" " Russia . . . . .	3,688 17
" " Brazil . . . . .	7,207 49
" " Mexico . . . . .	5,325 97
For Japan, translation work in . . . . .	1,239 57
" Germany, Bible distribution in . . . . .	3,838 58
" France . . . . .	3,517 00
" Denmark . . . . .	200 00
" Italy . . . . .	1,100 00
" Austria . . . . .	272 44
" Sweden . . . . .	2,266 42
" Russia . . . . .	3,000 00
" India . . . . .	966 17
" Chili . . . . .	700 00
	<hr/>
	\$108,120 63

The strictly benevolent and missionary work of the Society, in the home and foreign fields, has thus involved an expenditure of \$342,585 90.

In the balance sheet incorporated in Mr. Harris's letter, and in the preceding extracts from the Annual Report for 1881, may be found every line of the Report to which exception has been taken by the Connecticut Committee.

◆◆◆

As this Supplement may fall into the hands of some persons who do not see the *Bible Society Record*, we reprint the following articles which appeared in the regular issue for November.

#### SANBALLAT AND GASHMU.

"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak."

It can hardly have escaped the notice of friends of the American Bible Society throughout the land, that it has occasionally during the last four years been assailed in criticisms both oral and written, which were evidently prompted by the most unfriendly spirit. It was not to be expected that in an age when the Book is so violently assailed, the SOCIETY, whose sole object it is to encourage the circulation of the Book, should escape hostile assaults. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

The immediate occasion of the criticisms, fault-finding, innuendoes, and threats to which we allude, cannot always be discerned. Some of them, apparently due to personal antagonisms or grievances, remind one of the curses which Shimei heaped upon David, as he cast stones at the king and his followers. Some of them assume the slang of modern days, as if the chief end in view were the utterance of some smart thing, even though the object ridiculed were dear to the Master and his Church. Some of the later slanders which have been bruited through the land have alleged incompetence and obstructiveness against the business management of the institution, and by misrepresenting and dwarfing the work of the Society have sought to awaken prejudice against it. The columns of secular

newspapers especially have afforded room for anonymous assailants, whose articles have been distinguished by the grossest unfairness, and whose false conclusions, based on fictitious premises, have been eagerly caught up as news and widely published through the land with sensational headings. It is the old story over again of Sanballat and Gashmu, plotting together against an important work. Sanballat sent his servant with an open letter in his hand wherein was written, "It is reported among the heathen; and Gashmu saith it!" and such a thing as that, if Gashmu says it, is pretty likely to be taken up by the multitude and accepted, even though there are no such things done as he reports, and he has simply feigned them out of his own heart.

The editors of the *Record* do not propose to open its columns to controversy: much less to make them the repository of assaults which the writers will some day regret; but at the same time it seems only proper to take this means of removing some misconceptions and answering some slanders which have been diligently circulated in various parts of the country.

I. It should be noticed that this cheap and anonymous criticism comes from those who have no membership in the Society and no interest in its prosperity. Hostile in spirit, they do not claim that any rights of theirs have been infringed or any gifts of theirs perverted. Never having cared to constitute themselves directors or members, they do not hesitate to assail recklessly the work which others are attempting to do. But if Gashmu and the congregation with which he worships have not for years given a dollar to the Society, who is he that he should arraign, criticise, assail, and condemn it, and strive to cripple its usefulness?

II. Gashmu gets a hearing by belittling the legitimate work of the Society. He makes it appear that the object for which it exists is to give away Bibles, and tries to establish as the one test of its usefulness the value of its donations of Scripture.

But that is not the limit of the work committed to the Managers by its founders. The sole object of the Society from 1816 to the present day has been "to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment;" and a free donation of printed books is only one of many ways of accomplishing this grand result. The Society "encourages a wider circulation of the Scriptures" by *selling* its publications at the mere cost of paper, printing, and binding, a work as truly within its scope as a free gift to a mission Sabbath school. Its strictly missionary and benevolent work is done by encouraging local Bible organizations, by diffusing intelligence, by sending men to explore towns and counties and search out families and persons who are destitute of the Scriptures, by promoting new translations of the Bible and revisions of existing

versions, and by grants of books and appropriations of funds to missionary societies to promote the circulation of the Scriptures in their fields. The employment of district superintendents and colporteurs and of agents in foreign lands, the holding of anniversaries and other public meetings, the publication of the *Bible Society Record* and the *Annual Report*, and the partial concession in price to those who buy to sell again, involve an expenditure which is as truly in harmony with the Society's organic law, as the grants of books to life members and others. It is comparatively easy to give away Bibles, but to place them where they are needed, to find the cottager on the hill-top and convey the Bible to him, paying for boxing and freight and for the time and travelling expenses of the distributor, takes much longer time and may cost a good deal more than it does to manufacture the volume at the Bible House.

An illustration from the experience of the Bible Society of Connecticut is just in point. That society, last year, gave away Scriptures to the value of \$257 17. The men who distributed them were paid, for wages and expenses, \$2,837 59. The additional cost of the secretary's labours was \$2,664 69, making a total of \$5,502 28, which, according to Gashmu's reasoning, represents accurately the real cost of administration and distribution, and is equivalent to 2,137 per cent. on the cost of Bibles distributed gratuitously in the field of the Connecticut Bible Society. If Gashmu's reasoning is right, there is no evading this conclusion. But the benevolent work of the Bible Society is not to be judged by the bare cost of materials and manufacture. Additional value has been given to those materials when the book is delivered, thousands of miles away from the Bible House, with a word of Christian sympathy and counsel. But Sanballat and Gashmu and their tribe are blind and cannot see afar off. They see no benevolence whatever in the *sale* of a Bible in Alabama or Mexico; and if it is given away, they measure the value of the gift solely by the price at which it was inventoried when it left the bindery.

III. Gashmu says—and the whole corps of his followers report it through the land—that two out of every three dollars contributed to the Bible Society are consumed in salaries and other expenses of administration. This is false; and the whole fabric of accounting and estimate on which it is based is a fiction. The fact is, that not one dollar of the cost of administration at the Bible House is derived from the annual contributions of churches and individuals; that not a cent is diverted from donations or legacies to pay the salaries of executive officers. For all these expenses of administration ample provision is made from the rentals of the Bible House; and that House was built without drawing at all upon funds contributed for the ordinary purposes

of the Society. Whenever Gashmu becomes a contributor to its treasury, as we hope that he some day will, he may be satisfied that his entire gift will go to encourage the wider circulation of the Scriptures, without the deduction of even one *per cent.* for the cost of administration.

IV. Part of the assault upon the American Bible Society has been based on the fact, that among its executive officers are three ministers who happen to have been complimented by various colleges with honorary degrees. It is pretty certain that the Board of Managers did not appoint them to office on that account; and on the other hand, these appendages to their names have not been deemed a sufficient disqualification to warrant their removal from office, and the substitution of untitled men. But this is to be remembered—that the business of the Society is *conducted* by laymen who are the peers of any in the land for sagacity, enterprise, fidelity, tact, and all the qualities which are deemed essential for the administration of a sacred trust.

V. But, says one of the Gashmuites, the Society's Report does not contain anywhere a clear statement of what money has been received, what has been expended, and what the expenditure has actually accomplished.

This is a sin of willful ignorance.

The facts are as follows:

1. For the satisfaction of donors, and for the information of members of the Society, the By-Laws require that there should be published every month "a full statement of all payments and donations to the Society, with the names of the societies, congregations, and persons from whom they have been received." All this detail, having been once given in the *Bible Society Record*, is repeated in the Annual Report, where it occupies column after column from page 158 to page 194. Never has a dollar reached the treasury which has not been duly acknowledged in both these publications.

2. For the past ten years, the statement of what has annually been expended has been given, under various accounts, in larger detail than has been given by any society engaged in similar work. Four pages of the last Report are devoted to it.

3. A few months since, the Managers decided that, in addition to the annual statement of receipts and disbursements, the Sixty-fifth Report should contain a full schedule of all trust funds and securities held by the Society, and a transcript of the balance-sheet of the ledger. This was accordingly done, with such plainness that any one of ordinary intelligence can understand it; and yet, in the face of all these facts, Gashmu, who has not a dollar invested in the Society, asserts that it is trying to mislead the public. These reports of assets and liabilities contained no evasion; they covered up nothing; they misled no one. It is carping criticism, unworthy of

the Christian profession, which assails them, and which demands that the science of bookkeeping should be reconstructed to meet the whims of some unknown critic.

The simple matter of fact is, that the Society's Report to its members, more full and elaborate than ever before, is assailed by those who are not its constituents, with a spirit of hostility too bitter and insulting to be entitled to any direct reply.

◆◆◆

From the Cleveland Herald, Monday, Nov. 17, 1881.

#### LETTERS OF BISHOP BEDELL AND T. P. HANDY, ESQ.

##### LETTER OF BISHOP BEDELL.

CLEVELAND, OHIO, Oct. 31, 1881.

To the Editors of the *Herald*:

GENTLEMEN, AND GOOD FRIENDS:—Not long ago there appeared in your columns a news item, taken from the *Springfield Republican*, reflecting on the management of the finances of the American Bible Society. I give so much weight to your expressions of opinion as influencing public sentiment in Cleveland that, although the statement was not made on your responsibility, I felt that an opportunity should be given to remove any possible erroneous impression. I therefore sent a copy of your paper to the authorities of the Society in New York, requesting the necessary explanations.

They have sent a paper which is inclosed, but which, on account of its length, I cannot ask you to reproduce. However, the important testimony of Mr. J. N. Harris, president of the New London City National Bank, is brief, and I shall feel much obliged if you will reproduce that part of the statement.

My interest in this matter is considerable, for I have been a Manager of the American Bible Society for thirty-seven years, and during sixteen years, residing in New York, I was an active member of its Committee of Distribution. But as the question now arising belongs to the business of professional accountants, your readers will prefer the opinion of an expert. May I, therefore, beg that you will do me the favour, also, to publish the inclosed letter from T. P. Handy, Esq., before whom I have laid all the documents for his judgment thereon.

With great respect, I am yours,

G. T. BEDELL.

---

##### LETTER OF T. P. HANDY, ESQ.

CLEVELAND, OHIO, Oct. 31, 1881.

DEAR BISHOP BEDELL:—I have examined the Report of the American Bible Society, and the statement of its assets and liabilities, as prepared by its finance committee. It shows a very sound and prosperous condition of its affairs, and I have no doubt they are wisely managed. The statement is certainly clear and easily comprehended by any one familiar with the system of accounts.

I cannot see why the criticism, as published by the *Springfield Republican*, some time since, should be entitled to any weight. The able and clear review of the same by Mr. Harris, of New London, should be entirely satisfactory. This noble Society in its great work cannot be easily shaken by such attacks from without. It recommends itself more strongly than ever to the gifts and prayers of all who love God's word.

I remain yours very sincerely,

T. P. HANDY.

#### THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF CONNECTICUT.

At a recent meeting of the General Conference of Congregational Churches in West Winsted, a paper was presented by the Rev. Joseph Anderson, D.D., of Waterbury, who had been appointed a year before to attend the annual meeting of the American Bible Society and make a report upon its affairs. The larger part of his report is occupied with matters which do not call for special remark in this connection. Whatever theoretical defects the present generation may find in the constitutions of the great national benevolent societies which were organized in the early part of this century, other topics are of more immediate importance. Inasmuch, however, as Dr. Anderson is a member of the executive committee of the Connecticut Bible Society, whose recent action as published in the newspapers may call for some comment, we cannot forbear to give the readers of the *Record* the benefit of the closing paragraph of the report, which is signed by Dr. Anderson and the Rev. Salmon M'Call:

But we should be unwilling to close without saying this in relation to the National Society, that however absurd its constitution may be, and however imperfect its financial exhibit, it has a past abounding in rich fruitage, in foreign lands as well as in our own land—a history which we may well be proud of; and to-day, and at this hour, it has a group of officers whose integrity is beyond suspicion; who exhibit at once the independence and the considerateness of Christian gentlemen; and who, if doomed to monopolize what forty thousand should divide among themselves of honour and responsibility, are as worthy and as safe as any men upon whom that burden could be laid.

---

##### “THIS ONE THING I DO.”

The report of Dr. Anderson, above alluded to, opens for discussion a theory of Bible Society work, the general adoption of which would either revolutionize or completely do away with all organizations whose sole object is to promote the increased circulation of the Holy Scriptures. He says, “the Secretaries, taking their stand upon the letter of the constitution, according to which the sole object of the American Bible Society is ‘to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures,’ would limit the work of their colporteurs strictly to the distribution of the sacred volume, as a whole, or in parts;” and in contrast with this he presents a theory which insists upon the legitimacy of connecting with Bible distribution “the collection of such statistics as will throw light upon the moral and spiritual condition of the places visited, and indeed, an extensive work of evangelization,—such a work as transforms the colporter from a mere book peddler to a home missionary.”

It is remarkable to notice with what unanimity the great Bible societies of this country and of the world have given peculiar prominence to the matter of Bible distribution which Dr. Anderson characterizes in another paragraph as “purely

incidental." The British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804 struck the key-note in the identical words which the American Bible Society adopted in 1816. The first article of the constitution of the Connecticut Bible Society in 1809, declared that "the circulation of the Holy Scriptures shall be its only object," taking even a more limited sphere than that filled by the American Bible Society. It would be superfluous to cite to any greater extent the language chosen by the founders of Bible societies to express the object in support of which they have sought the contributions of the public; but it is not amiss to refer to cases where legislative authority has expressly defined and restricted the objects for which charters have been granted. The American Bible Society in 1841 became a body corporate "for the purpose of publishing and promoting a general circulating of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment." And more recently the committee of the Connecticut Society, feeling that their constitution "required a thorough *revision* to adapt it to present needs," drew up an act of incorporation, procured its passage by the General Assembly of the State in 1879, and so became a body corporate, not for general purposes of domestic evangelization and home missionary work, nor for the collection of statistics throwing light on the moral and spiritual condition of the State, nor for the gathering of children into schools and families into churches, but for "*the benevolent distribution of the Holy Scriptures.*"

No one will question that a Bible distributor should carry with him a decidedly Christian influence, that he should commend the book he is expected to sell, and should be himself "a living epistle," whose presence in any household is a benediction. More than one-half of the colporteurs employed by the American Bible Society in this country are ministers of the gospel, and the service which they render is not to be dismissed with a sneer, as if they were "*mere book peddlers.*" Their work for the Master is as genuine and useful as if they were commissioned also to take a duplicate census of names and ages and nationality, denominational preference and Sunday school attendance, and leave a copy of it with some responsible person in the town, to be consulted by all who desire it.

No doubt there are many attractive forms of missionary effort; tract distribution, city missions, parochial visitation, home evangelization, church extension, Bible readings, are terms suggestive of a wide range of activities which no Christian community will undervalue; but to take the Bible Society banner, and then to proclaim that Bible distribution is "a purely incidental work," or that "the perfunctory scattering of the Bible is of comparatively little importance," and that "the gathering of statistics and thorough evangelistic effort" are of paramount importance, strikes some people as not alto-

gether fair. Wherever such work is undertaken and organized, Bible Society funds are legitimately employed to secure copies of the Scriptures for distribution; but it is hardly to be expected that enterprises of that kind will bind together the different denominations, as the Bible cause does, on the one basis of aiming to circulate the word of God without note or comment.

That rich fruitage of the past of which Dr. Anderson speaks, and the history which he so highly commends, do not cast any shadow on the work which the American Bible Society is doing to-day. The Master said of old, "The poor always ye have with you;" and though the Society has circulated nearly forty million copies of Scripture, its work even in our own land continues to grow. Never were its manufacturing facilities more taxed than they have been since the first of April last, and Bible distribution by colporteurs was never done with greater efficiency and economy.

Thus far the Society has had a single aim. Like the Apostle it could say, "this one thing I do." Its founders had faith in the printed volume as an instrumentality assigned by God to an important place in the extension of his kingdom. Its Managers in succeeding generations have never wavered in the belief that in encouraging the wider circulation of the Scriptures without note or comment, they were doing good service for the King. In loyal devotion to that object, the living have brought their offerings and the dying have bequeathed their gifts.

On such resources the Board of Managers still depends. It needs the loving co-operation of the churches of Christ. It receives as a sacred trust the contributions, large and small, which are borne to its treasury by ten thousand streams, and according to the wisdom which is granted it, it seeks to scatter in ever-widening circles the radiance which has revealed to so many hearts and homes the glory of the gospel of the blessed God.

---

The following article, prepared for the next number of the *Record*, is here given in advance.

#### THE BIBLE HOUSE.

It has recently become evident that the facts concerning the erection of the Bible House and the special reasons for reporting the salaries of executive officers under the Building Fund Account should be restated for the information of the present generation. The interesting story can never be told without awakening sincere gratitude to God, mingled with a high appreciation of the remarkable sagacity displayed by the noble men who directed the affairs of the Society thirty years ago, some of whom have continued to render self-sacrificing service as officers or members of the Board of Managers until this day.

The corner-stone of the Bible House was laid

on the 11th day of May, 1852, and the Society took possession of the premises on the 1st day of May, 1853, though some parts of the building were not completed until about a month subsequently, the erection of the building occupying rather more than a year.

The Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the Society, published in 1853, devotes seven pages to the "New Bible House," and the *Bible Society Record* for May of that year presents a most interesting account of the exercises on the occasion of the formal occupancy of the Building. The Report of the following year presents the special report of the Building Committee, consisting of George D. Phelps, Norman White, Charles N. Talbot, A. Robertson Walsh, Luther Bradish, and James Suydam; from which document we reproduce the following paragraphs:

"The first step in the series of events which has resulted in placing us in the position we occupy, is to be found in the action of the Committee of Publication and Finance, in March, 1851, recommending to the Board the purchase of the good will of the lease of the lot of ground adjoining our premises on the south, by the improvement of which, in connexion with our own buildings, it was supposed the additional amount of accommodation, so imperatively demanded by the increasing business of the Society, would be amply supplied, and at a comparatively small increase of annual expense.

"The arrangement, financially, would have been a favourable one; but Providence had better things in store for us. The views of many members of the Board were found adverse to the increase of our investment, even favourably, in the confined location of the old Bible House, and influenced by their views, which the result has shown were eminently judicious, the Board did not concur in the recommendation; but, at the succeeding meeting, appointed a Committee to make inquiries, with a view to the purchase of an eligible site for the erection of new and more commodious buildings.

"Though the terms of their appointment did not restrict the Committee within prescribed limits, yet the views of the Board, as then expressed, indicated, with sufficient plainness, their preference for a location below Canal Street, to induce the Committee to confine their inquiries within that boundary. Though diligent in prosecuting their investigations, and though almost every location containing sufficient extent of ground, within the line indicated, was carefully mapped out and examined, they were unsuccessful in their search, a disability resting upon some portion of every plot of ground, of four or five lots, to which their attention was directed.

"Finding their labours in this direction fruitless, the Committee were attracted to several sites a few squares beyond, where ground to the extent of  $100 \times 125$  could probably be secured in locations which, though not very prominent, were, with

their then moderate views, thought to be highly eligible.

"The preliminary step to any negotiation was, of course, the assent of the Board to a more extended field of inquiry; and with some diffidence as to its acquiescence in any step which contemplated a removal so far from the business centre of the city, the Committee suggested that they should be authorized to extend their inquiries to locations as high up as Bleecker Street. But here again the hand of God is seen, bringing us by a way we knew not; for the Board, instead of simply conceding to the Committee the authority for which they asked, at once removed all restrictions, and they were, most unexpectedly to themselves, clothed with power, not only to select, but to purchase, such ground as they may deem suited for the uses of the Society, without restriction as to location, extent, or price.

"The inspiring influence of such a vote, indicating not only so generous a confidence in the judgment of the Committee, but so significant of a readiness, on the part of the Board, to sustain a movement commensurate with the importance of our cause, produced its immediate effect on the minds of the Committee.

"Discarding at once the restricting influences which had circumscribed both their action and their plans in the outset, they were prepared to consider the feasibility of projects, of which the very magnitude would, but a short time previously, have been sufficient to have precluded even the consideration; and when their attention was invited to the plot of ground we now occupy—the singular advantages of its central location, its accessibility, its entire freedom from nuisances, its pure air, and uninterrupted light—all seemed to unite in indicating it as the locality, which, of all others, was best suited to the purposes of the Society.

"But even here, not yet prepared for the benevolent designs of Providence in regard to us, while the Committee recommended the purchase of the entire plot of ground, it was only to enable us to select such portion as might be most advantageously improved for our own use, and, by the sale of the remainder, to reduce the cost of the investment.

"We need scarcely to be reminded of the enthusiastic vote by which the Board at once adopted the recommendation of the Committee to purchase, and how emphatically they refused at the same moment to alienate one single foot of the ground, but resolved to retain and improve the whole, for the present and prospective uses of the Society.

"Is any disposed here to dwell on the enlarged views and wise forecast which concerned a plan so full of promise to this holy cause?—We have but to compare the narrow boundaries within which we were content to confine ourselves in the outset of this movement with the extended and commodious space we now use, to feel how entirely even the most sagacious among us fell short of any con-

ception of such a result as Providence has realized to us.

"And lest our feeble faith should fail to discern God's superintending care in the circumstances which led to the selection of our site, in our financial experience He has made his providence so marked, that he that runneth may read.

"Though the expenditure for this vast enterprise has been so great, and though the Board resolved upon its action without any defined plan for carrying it through, or indeed, without the least discussion as to the cost, nor how it was to be supplied, yet never for a moment has the treasury experienced the slightest embarrassment—in no one instance has a bill, properly audited, been a second time presented to it for payment—but, like the widow's cruse, its supply has been found equal to every call, ceasing only with the demand upon its resources.

"A most marked circumstance in connection with this part of the history of this work, is the fact, that it has been carried through without the use, even temporarily, of one dollar of the ordinary contributions of the Society. These have been sacredly devoted to the purposes of the distribution of the word of life. But our God himself has supplied all our need."

The historic documents which present the views of the Board concerning the Bible House, repeatedly set forth one point with emphasis, namely:

*That not a farthing of the ordinary benevolent contributions was used in the erection of the building, but it stood, when completed, as a special gift to the Society from residents of the city of New York.*

This point is of so much interest that we reproduce the language of the Circular issued in 1851.

After describing the limited accommodations of the House in Nassau Street, the paper adds:

"But while a desirable site is obtained, a House is not yet erected, and means for its erection are secured only in part; no farther than what may be realized from the sale of the present establishment. How shall the additional funds required be obtained? This is a grave question; one which has caused the Board much deliberation, and led them to seek the wisest counsel among the friends of the Institution. The result of all has been, a deep conviction that they are called upon to go forward and use conscientiously the moneys at command, and then ask the benevolent in New York to come and unite in furnishing additional aid. They are encouraged to this course by looking to the history of the first House of the Society, built in 1822. This was all paid for cheerfully by our citizen fathers, most of whom have now ceased from their labours. They felt that it would be unwise to invite the residents of other cities, and those in the country, to take part in putting up a Bible House here, though designed for the whole country. They desired that it should be a present from this great metropolis to the nation, so that all remittances,

large and small, from abroad, might go directly towards publishing and circulating the Holy Scriptures. It is believed that many of our present citizens, on understanding the case, will be desirous that the same policy of 1822 may still be adhered to, by those who live to see now the need of another and an enlarged building.

"For the purpose of ascertaining who and how many entertain such views, the Managers have appointed a Committee to see various individuals, and learn how far they are disposed to lend their aid in preparing the House so urgently demanded.

"What success the Board are to meet with in this effort to collect funds, remains to be seen."

The official list shows that 238 subscriptions were received, ranging from one dollar to \$5,000, and reveals also this remarkable fact, that of the total amount of \$58,898 only \$143 came from beyond the limits of New York City, and of this sum \$100 were from a friend in New Brunswick, N.J., and \$40 from a church in Brooklyn. There is therefore abundant reason for the large measure of satisfaction which the friends of the American Bible Society, residing in the metropolis, have ever felt in the plain, but commodious and imposing structure known as the Bible House.

The building within about ten years from the day of its completion was entirely unincumbered by debt. This result had been accomplished by appropriating the amount of \$105,000 received from the sale of the Nassau Street house, together with the special subscriptions of \$59,000, in round numbers, and \$140,000 received from rentals. In 1863, therefore, the Board of Managers issued a most cheering deliverance, in which they give emphasis to another point which has frequently been alluded to in the preceding years as a cherished wish, and by formal action resolved that the salaries of the executive officers should be paid from the Building Fund. These words, as found in the Report for 1863, are as follows:

"The Board of Managers have great satisfaction in reporting the present state of the funds pertaining to the Bible House. This may be stated in the language of the final report of the Finance Committee upon the Building Fund account, which says that in a period of ten years from the occupation of this building, the whole debt on the property has been cancelled, and a future income realized for the general objects of the Society, more than sufficient to pay the salaries of all the executive officers of the Society. It is also gratifying to be able to state that the Bible House held by the American Bible Society is the result of individual subscriptions made for that purpose, and the rents since received; and that no part of the funds raised for the publication and distribution of the Scriptures has been invested in it.

"The manner in which funds were provided for the erection of this edifice were fully detailed in the Thirty-sixth and Thirty-Eighth Annual Reports of this Society for 1852 and 1854, showing that the said funds were partly subscriptions,

almost wholly in the city of New York, for this specific object; partly from the sale of the old premises in Nassau Street, which were erected in like manner; and partly from a loan, which is now fully extinguished, as above shown, from the rent of a portion of the building.

"It will be thus seen that the support of the executive officers is provided for, without using a dollar of the funds raised for the general objects of this Society. For this consummation, so happily effected, and so much earlier than the most sanguine expectations could have anticipated, the Managers feel the most profound gratitude to God.

"The views of the Board on this subject are expressed in the following resolution, which was adopted when the Building Committee presented their final report:

*"Resolved, That the Board do hereby render to the Committee and record their thanks for the skill, faithfulness, and success with which they have managed the Building Fund to the point of the entire extinction of the debt upon it, and of our full possession and use, not only of the commodious and valuable edifice in which the business of the Society is transacted, but thereby also of a fund, the avails of which are more than sufficient for defraying the whole expense of the officers of the Society, and all without the diversion of any, even the least portion, of the funds contributed specifically for the distribution of the Bible."*

This action furnishes the explanation of the fact that salaries of officers are uniformly given in the Annual Report under the Building Fund Account; and it is a matter of sincere satisfaction to all concerned, that for eighteen years the income from rentals has been more than sufficient to pay the salaries of all the executive officers of the Society, and that in fact they are not paid either from the ordinary benevolent contributions of the living or from the legacies of the departed, but from the rentals of the Building.

It is believed that the history of the benevolent organizations of the Christian world displays no more conspicuous evidences of the blessing of God upon consecrated human sagacity than is manifested in the history of the Bible House.

#### RENEWALS.

All persons who are receiving the *Bible Society Record*, as subscribers or as life members, are respectfully requested to take notice of the date affixed to their names on the label of the paper, and to give reasonable notice of their desire to receive the *Record* another year. Many subscriptions expire at this season of the year, as indicated by the sign, "Dec. '81," or "Jan. '82."

Friends of the Society are also invited to organize clubs of subscribers, and thus secure a wider circulation for the information about foreign and domestic distribution which its columns contain.

In the single department of furnishing information concerning the translation and circulation of the Bible, at home and abroad, the *Record* stands without a rival.

The *Record* for 1882 will be sent, postage prepaid, as follows:

1. To individual subscribers who have forwarded 30 cents in payment.
2. To churches, auxiliary societies, and clubs, at the rate of twelve copies for three dollars.
3. To life members and life directors who request it on the grounds of their membership.
4. To the officers of each auxiliary society which keeps up its remittances to our treasury.

*Every life director or life member who is entitled to the Record and fails to receive it, is specially requested to communicate with us by letter or by postal card.*